

Washington Bottom Farmhouse  
Allegany Ballistics Laboratory  
Rocket Center  
Mineral County  
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-244

HABS  
WVA,  
29-ROCE,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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WVA,  
29-ROCE  
1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

Washington Bottom Farmhouse

HABS No. WV-244

Location: Hercules Incorporated, Allegany Ballistics  
Laboratory, Rocket Center, Mineral County  
West Virginia

USGS Cresaptown Quadrangle, Universal  
Transverse Mercator Coordinates:  
17.685540.4381220

Present Owner: Hercules Incorporated  
Missiles, Ordnance & Space  
Allegany Ballistics Laboratory  
P. O. Box 210  
Rocket Center, West Virginia 26726

Present Occupant: Vacant

Significance: This farmhouse is linked to Major Lawerance  
Washington, brother of President George  
Washington, and to Felix R. Seymore, prominent  
land owner and public official of historic  
Hampshire and Mineral Counties, West Virginia.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: The erection date of the original log structure is not known. It is likely that the log structure portion of the farmhouse was completed prior to August 22, 1870 when Felix R. Seymore purchased the Washington Bottom Farm.
2. Architect: None
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: The following is an incomplete list of title to the land referred to as the Washington Bottom Farm. Reference is made to the Clerk's Office of the County of Mineral, West Virginia.

1752 Deed March 20, 1752. Recorded in Volume 2, Page 78. Lord Fairfax to Major Lawerance Washington Two-371 acre tracts of land described as "North Branch of Potomac".

1834 Deed November 16, 1834. Recorded in Volume 30, Pages 116 and 117. Thomas McNeil to James Williams, several tracts of land known as the "Washington Bottom".

1848 Deed March 9, 1848. Recorded in Volume 41, Pages 127 and 128. James Williams to Nimrod Farr, all of those same lands conveyed by McNeil to Williams.

1857 Deed March 20, 1857. Recorded in Volume 44, Pages 187 and 188. Nimrod Farr to Isaac Inskeep, five tracts of land conveyed to Farr by Williams.

1870 Deed August 22, 1870. Recorded in Deed Book 3, Pages 137 and 138. Isaac Inskeep to Felix R. Seymore, five tracts of land with survey descriptions and acreages.

1885 Deed February 7, 1885. Recorded in Deed Book 10, Page 648 thru 650. Felix R. Seymore to William R. Percy, tracts of land known as "The Washington Bottom Farm."

1940 Deed March 26, 1940. Recorded in Deed Book 10, Pages 140 thru 145. Helen A. (Percy)

Hitchens to J. Paul Blundon, five tracts of land known as "The Washington Bottom Farm."

1941 Deed September 20, 1941. Recorded in Deed Book 64, Pages 255 thru 260. J. Paul Blundon to George S. Arnold, five tracts of land known as "The Washington Bottom Farm."

1942 Declaration of Taking, June 13, 1942. Recorded in Deed Book 66, Pages 162 thru 168. The United States of America took possession of a tract of land known as "The Washington Bottom Farm." The property is currently occupied by Allegany Ballistics Laboratory.

4. Builders, Suppliers:

- a. Builders: Not Known
- b. Suppliers: Not Known

5. Original Plans and Construction: The original structure was a two-and-one-half story, four-room log structure. No original plans or drawings have been found.

6. Alterations and Additions: There have been two dramatic changes to the original log structure. The farm house was first enlarged with a wood framed addition which more than doubled the square footage of the original structure. Secondly, the farm house was completely remodeled to transform the structure into an office and storage facility for Hercules, Inc..

According to research conducted by the Naval Facilities Command, of the Mineral County, West Virginia tax records, the newer addition was probably constructed some time after 1876. 1876 tax records of the farm then owned by Felix R. Seymore appraised the building value of the farm at \$1,000.00, far less than it is believed to be, had the large addition been built.

Interviews with Mrs. Eva Barton who moved into the Washington Bottom farm house with her family in 1907,

recalls that the newer addition was in place prior to their arrival. Her family moved to the farm from Grantsville, Maryland when her father, Mr. Norman Yoder, was hired to run the farm from 1907 thru 1918 by then owner, Mr. William Percy. She recalls that her family lived in the addition, while hired workers lived in the original structure. This dates the addition as being constructed after 1876 but prior to 1907.

In 1960 the farm house was completely remodeled to house the Purchasing Department of Allegany Ballistics Laboratory. The large rooms of the farm house were partitioned into smaller rooms. The two side and front porches were enclosed. The whole interior was made to look like a government office. The Purchasing Department conducted business out of the farm house until the present office building was completed in 1964.

#### B. Historical Context:

It is likely that from the time that Felix R. Seymore owned the farm, 1870 thru 1885, the farm house was occupied by those families hired by the land owners to run the farm.

Mrs. Anna Edwards Durst recalls the farm house owned by her grandfather Mr. William Percy from 1885 thru 1897, and co-owned by her mother Mrs. Rose Edwards from 1897 thru 1940. She stated that the farm house was occupied by the farm's caretaker and several of the hired farm hands. This again was the case when Mrs. Barton's family lived there from 1907 thru 1918.

From 1942 until 1960 the farm house was used by Hercules, Inc. to house plant managers. From 1960 until 1964 the farm house was used by Hercules, Inc. to house their Purchasing Department. Since 1964 the farm house has served as a storage facility.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: The Washington Bottom farm house is an example of cross-gabled vernacular architecture common to the late 1800's. Due to its

later alteration , most distinctive elements of the farm house have been lost.

2. Condition of Fabric: The farm house is structurally sound. The foundation and frame have no visible weaknesses. The exterior of the house is severely weathered. Interior walls and floors have severe water damage.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The two-and-one-half story, original log structure has an unfinished basement with a newer concrete floor. The original structure is 35'-8" across and 18'-5 1/2" deep. The newer two-and-one-half story addition has a newer basement under the eastern two-thirds of the building. The addition is 46'-6" across and 22'-6" deep.
2. Foundation: The foundation of the original log structure is squared and coarsed rubble approximately 2' thick. The foundation of the newer addition is 1' thick brick, with a 1'-8" thick poured concrete wall, lining that section of the house that has a basement.
3. Walls: The walls of the original log structure are made of heavy, squared timbers, 12" thick. The exterior was later covered with lap wood siding. Walls of the newer addition are 2" X 4", rough-cut pine with tongue and groove wood siding.
4. Structural System: Exterior and partition walls of the log structure are load bearing. First floor joists are 10"-12" diameter logs at 2'-6" on center. Second and third floor joists are 2" X 8", rough-cut pine at 2'-0" on center. Roof rafters are 2" X 8" rough-cut pine at 2'-4" on center.

The exterior walls of the newer addition are balloon framed using 2" X 4" rough-cut pine lumber. Floor joists are 2" X 12" pine at 16" on center. Roof rafters are 2" X 8" pine at 2'-4" on center.

5. Porches: Porches were added to the log structure when the newer framed addition was built. The first and second floor porches built on the east side of the original structure measure 34'-9" across and 12'-0" wide.

The newer addition was built with a front porch on the south side of that addition. The porch measures 46'-6" across and 9'-11 wide.

6. Chimneys: The log structure had two chimneys to accommodate the first and second floor fireplaces on the north-east end and north-west side.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways: According to sketches, the log structure had a basement door in the north-east corner of the foundation. There were two first floor entrances to the log structure on it's east side.

The newer addition has a basement entrance at its north-east corner. There is one first floor entrance on the south side of the addition.

- b. Windows and Shutters: The windows in both sections of the house are all double hung, but do not have a consistent number of lights. The log structure had originally 6 over 1 windows and the addition 2 over 2 windows.

There is no evidence of shutters, original or new.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, Covering: The roof is cross-gabled with slate shingles. The newer addition has snow boards on the second floor. The porch on the newer addition has a hip roof covered with double salvage roll roofing.
  - b. Cornice, Eaves: The eaves on both sections of the house are trimmed with crown moulding. A 1" X 10" freeze board runs the entire perimeter of all overhangs.
  - c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: None exist.

- C. Description of Interior: The 1942 remodeling of the house destroyed all traces of the original interiors. There does exist a sketch of the house prior to remodeling. Reference is made to Hercules Corporation Archives.

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: The basement of the original structure is one large open room with no internal load bearing support. There is a ten foot ceiling and a dirt floor. The newer addition originally had a half-height crawl space beneath the structure. In 1907 the basement was excavated to full depth to accommodate a gas furnace. The deepened section has 2'-0" thick poured concrete walls and floor.
- b. First Floor: The first floor of the original structure was divided into a kitchen and a dining room. The addition had a large central hall, large bedroom with a bathroom, and the living room.
- c. Second Floor: The second floor of the original structure was divided into two bedrooms. The addition had two large bedrooms on the second floor.
- d. Attics: The attic in the original log structure had interior framed walls added to provide a finished area. Lath and plaster cover the walls and ceiling. A framed opening was installed to provide passage to the unimproved attic of the newer addition.

2. Stairways: According to sketches, the original log structure had very narrow, steep corner stairs to the second floor and to the attic. Both stairs were located at the north-east corner of the house.

Sketches of the newer addition show an open stair to the second floor, complete with a hand rail and second floor guard rail. The 1942 remodeling replaced the open rail with a framed wall.

- 3. Flooring: No information is available.
- 4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: No information is available.
- 5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and Doors: No information is available.
  - b. Windows: No information is available.



6. Decorative Features and Trim: No information is available.
7. Hardware: No information is available.
8. Mechanical Equipment: Mrs. Eva Barton recalls that after 1907, her father excavated a basement under the newer addition to accommodate a new fuel oil heating system. During this same time, an acetylene lighting system was added.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The log structure faces north-east. The newer addition was built perpendicular to the south-east end of the log structure, with its front facing south-east.

The house sits in the bottom of a valley, bordered to the north by the Potomac River and to the east by steep, rugged mountains. The Hercules compound surrounds the house, and fills much of the valley.

The only other structure on the site that may be of the same time period as the Washington Bottom Farmhouse is the large barn 150' to the east. This barn can be seen in Photograph WV-244-18. The barn is currently used for storage by Allegany Ballistics Laboratory and is not open to the public.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- A. Architectural Drawings: Allegany Ballistics Laboratory Archives have drawings of the Washington Bottom Farmhouse as it was in 1942 prior to modifications, and then as it was in 1960 after the house was converted into an office building. These drawings have been reduced and are included in this report. For access to the original drawings contact Mr. Mike Cunningham at the address given on Page 1 of this report or call Mike at 301-726-5126.
- B. Historic Views: The historic view photograph was provided by Mrs. Barton and shows the house as it was in 1924.
- C. Interviews:

1. Mrs. Eva Barton: Mrs. Barton occupied "The Washington Bottom Farmhouse" with her family from 1907 thru 1918. Mrs. Barton has a vivid recollection of the house and of the time she lived there. I am delighted to have met Mrs. Barton and thank her for her assistance.

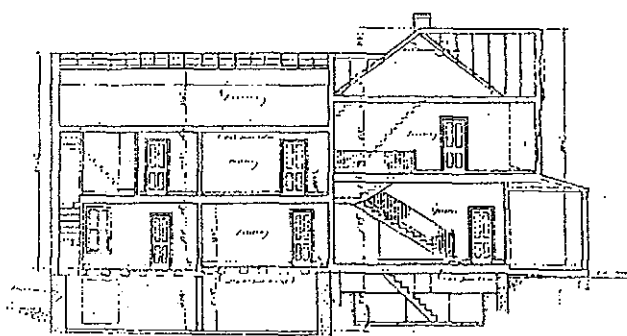
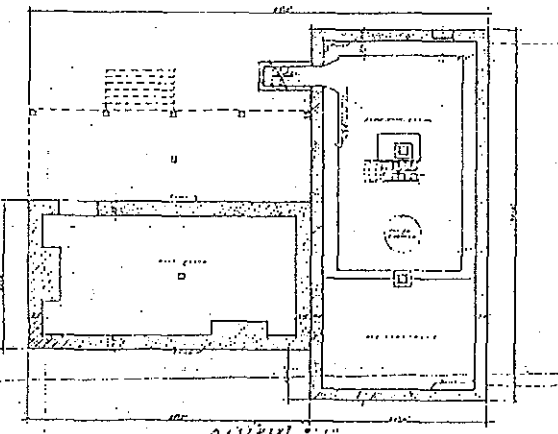
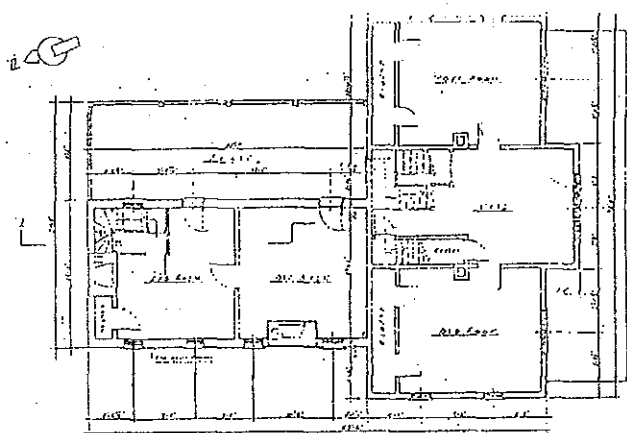
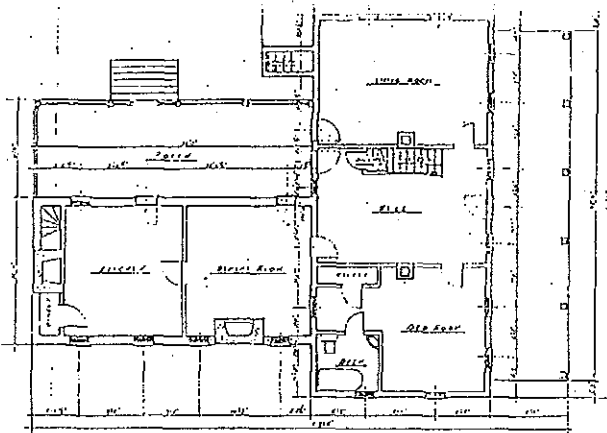
Mrs. Anna Edwards Durst: Mrs. Durst was interviewed briefly by phone. She told of a time period when her grandfather, Mr. William Percy, owned the farm.

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Micon Equipment, Inc. entered into contract with Hercules Incorporated to demolish Hercules Building 26 (Washington Bottom Farmhouse). The house is on the National Register of Historic Places due to its affiliation to Felix R. Seymour.

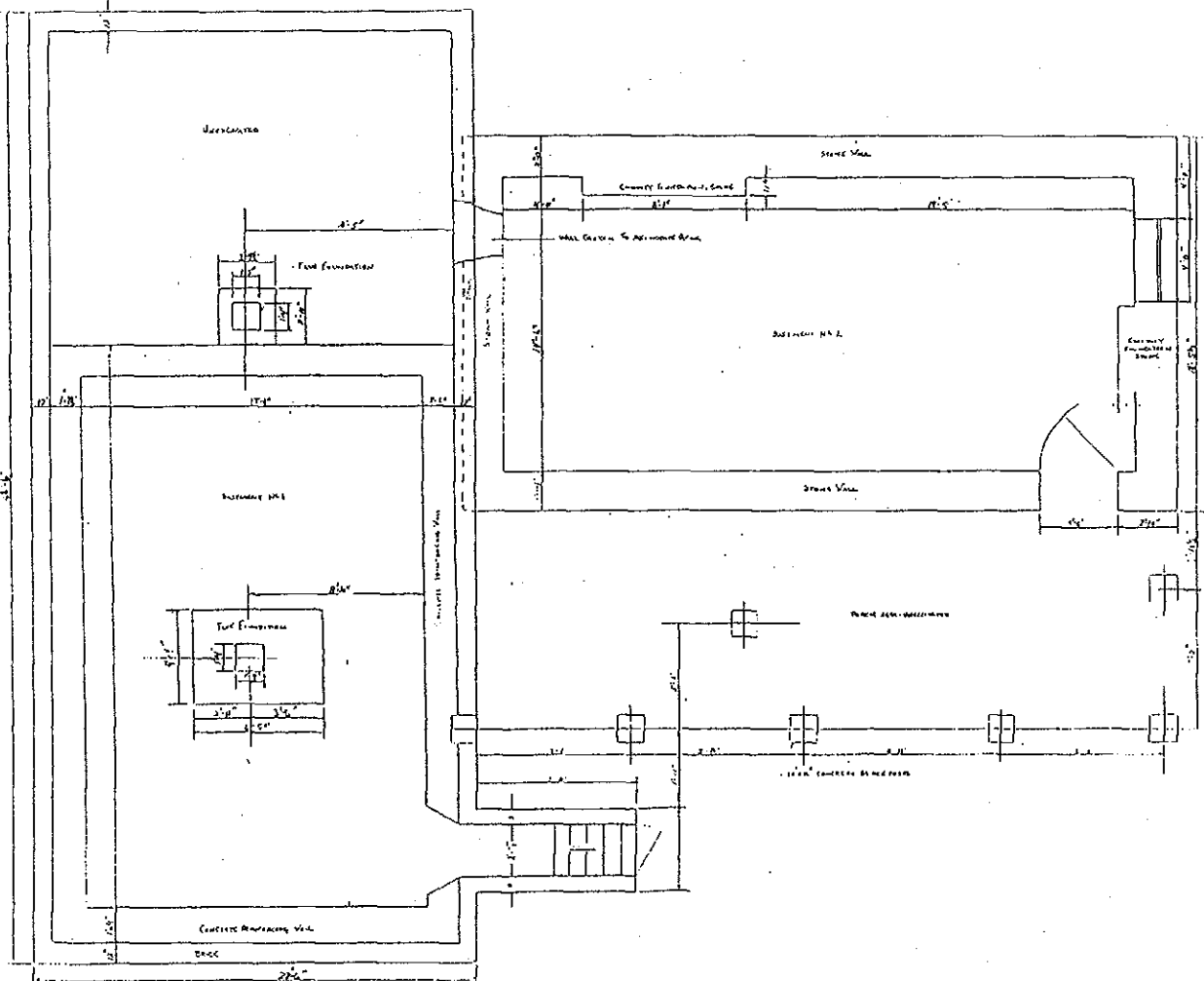
Prepared by: Kevin R. Johnson  
Title: Project Manager  
Affiliation: Micon Equipment, Inc.  
Date: 03/01/91

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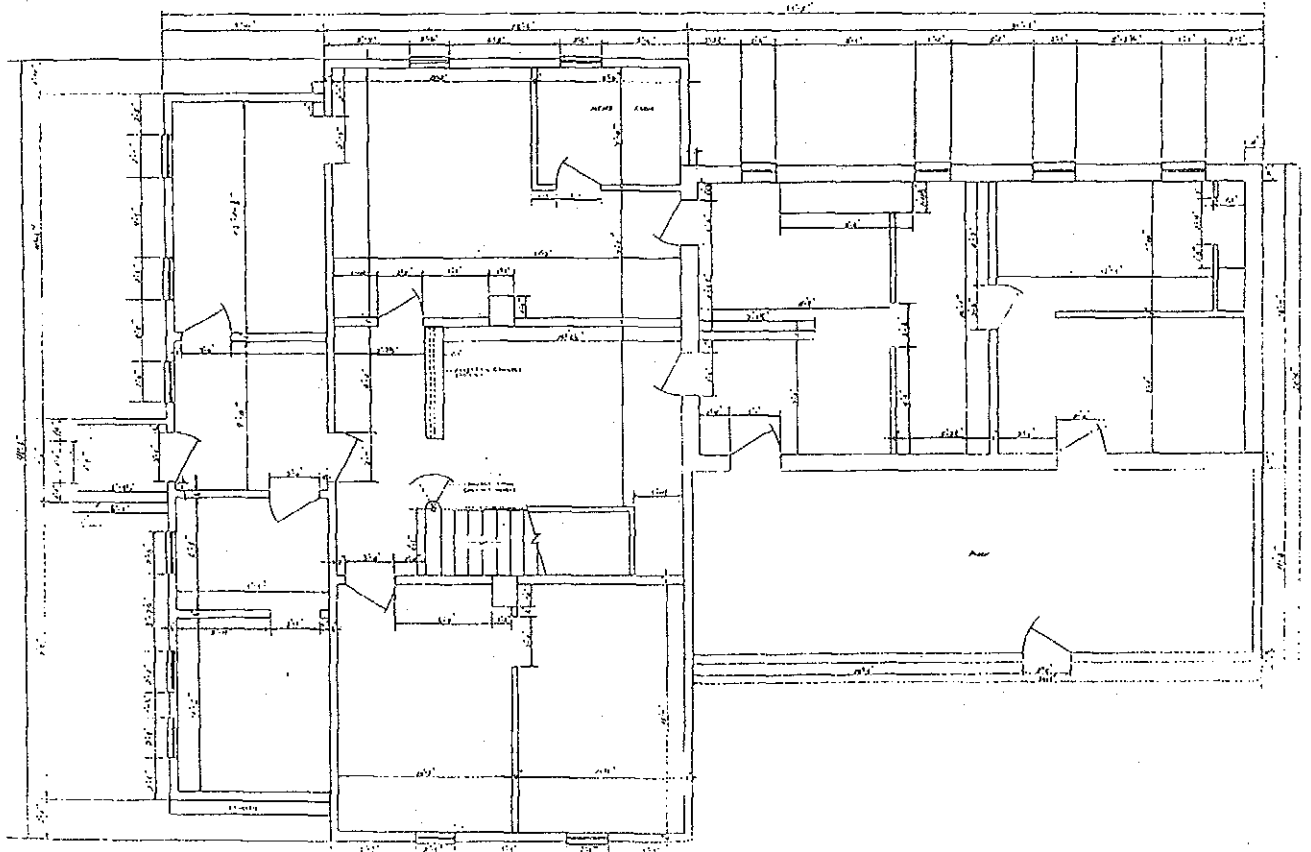
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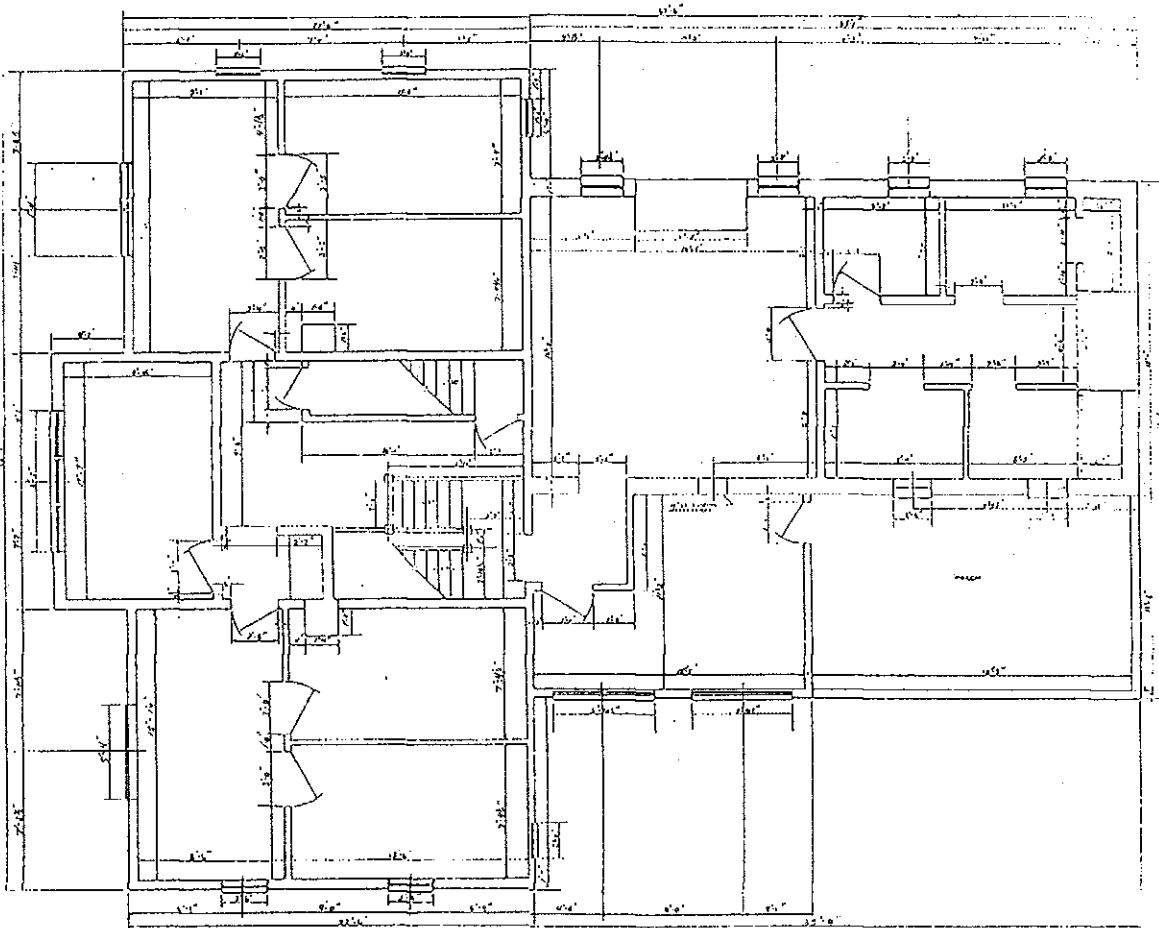
Foundation & Basement Plan  
Date: 12-19-60

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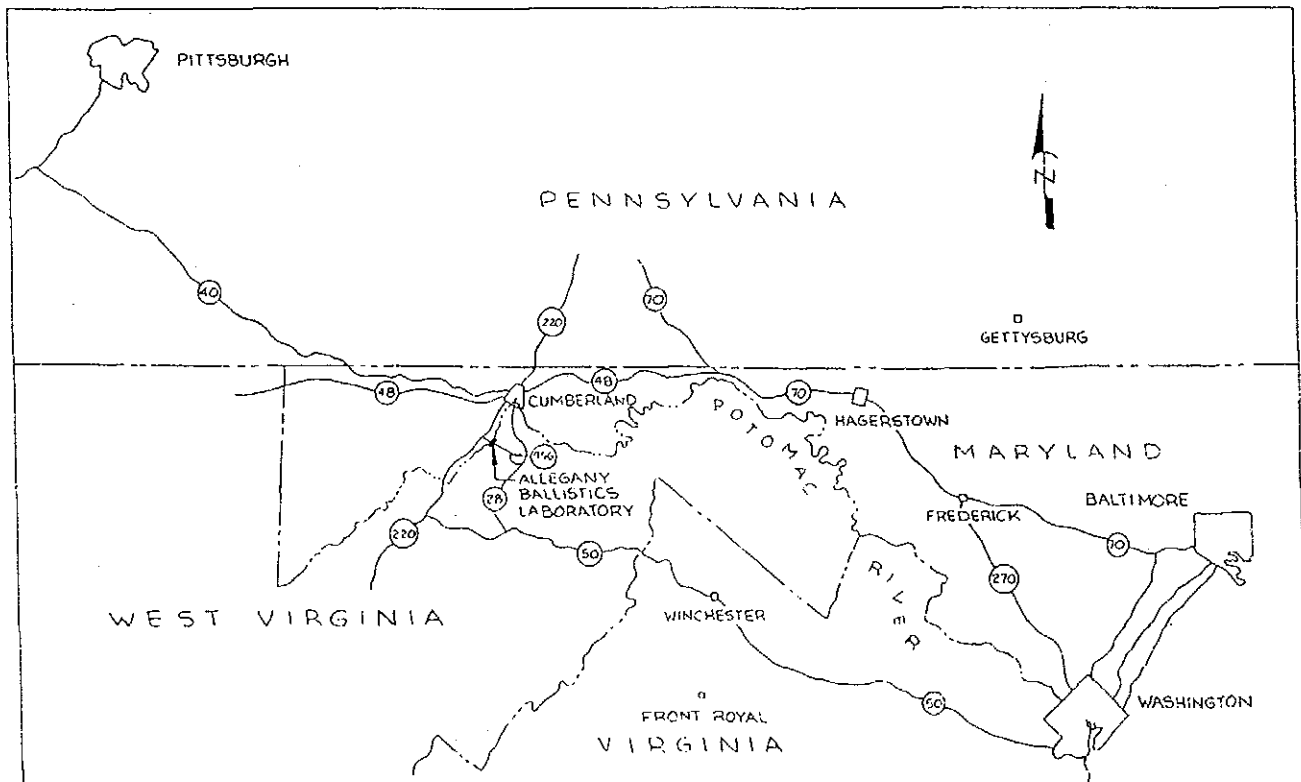


First Floor Plan  
Date: 12-19-60.

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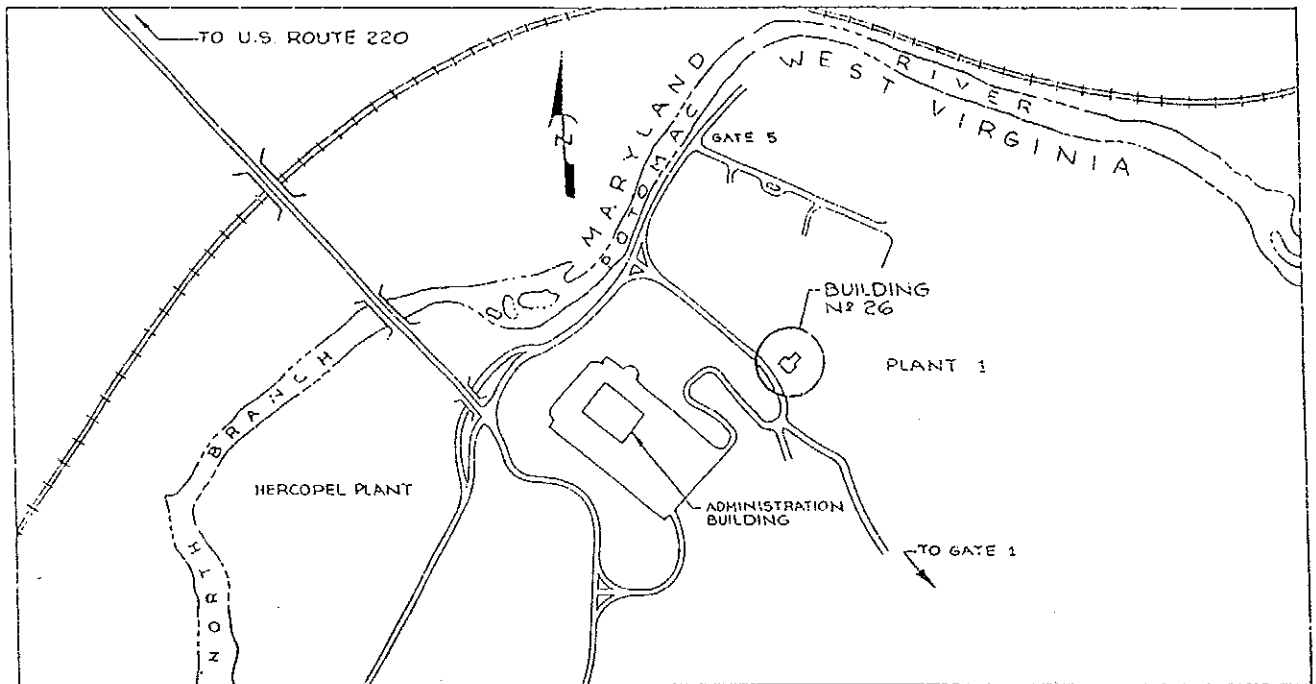


Second Floor Plan  
Date: 12-19-60 ..



VICINITY MAP  
SCALE: 1" = APPROX 32 MILES

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ALLEGANY BALLISTICS LABORATORY  
LOCATION MAP  
SCALE: 1" = 1,200'